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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the ecological and psychological transitions women undergo as they consider leaving the classroom for an administrative position. The report focuses on the perceptions and aspirations of women teachers who have decided to pursue positional leadership and who anticipate a career move within 2 years. For the study, 11 women who were enrolled in educational administration preparation programs participated. Data were gathered through semistructured interviews, through the analysis of journals the women kept, and through notes from their paired conversations. During the axial stage of coding three dominant themes emerged from the data: (1) the women were grounded in the necessity for affiliation; (2) the women were other-centered and prioritized the moral responsibility for the care of the relationships in their lives; and (3) the women were on a mission of service. It was concluded that the women were on a beliefs-centered mission of service bolstered by their affinity for affiliation and enabled by their responsibility for, and their accommodation of, others' needs. The findings can inform educational organizations. (Contains 24 references.) (RJM)

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Women in Transition: A Mission of Service

A research report presented at the
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Over the past three decades women in leadership have been viewed as anomalies, as deficient with respect to the traditional male models of leadership (Jones and Montenegro, 1983; Krchniak, 1977; Lesser, 1978; Paddock, 1981; Valverde, 1974; Valverde, 1974) for their uniqueness (Fishel & Pottker, 1975; Hemphill, Griffiths & Fredericksen, 1962), because of the personal and societal obstacles they have encountered (Darley, 1976; Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Shakeshaft, 1980) and for the contributions they are able to make when their gender related behaviors are affirmed and valued (Frasher & Frasher, 1979). Helgeson (1990) has described female leadership as web-like, dynamic, continuously expanding and contracting. Female leadership, Helgeson (1990) explained, is highly connective, deriving its strength from empowering others. Female leadership then takes on different appearances, different shapes, different directions as a web in constant redesign.

Rosener (1990) suggested that a woman's leadership orientation is marked by a concern for community and culture. Characterized by a disposition toward a democratic culture, women concern themselves with the importance of establishing relationships and maintaining connections with others. In a leadership position, women are more likely to critically examine the past, ask the difficult questions, promote collective visioning, focus on the development of others, and to respond with the good of the community at heart (Irwin, 1995). They practice leadership as a form of inquiry; they are more apt to foster organizational exploration. Despite the real potential for organizational learning and constructive change a woman's model of leadership could foster in our schools, women continue to struggle as they assume supervisory roles in schools and districts dominated by the traditional male model of leadership and

professional success.

When women are appointed to leadership positions, they enter existing social groups with established norms, beliefs, and assumptions that guide interactions and relationships. School principals, superintendents, and other educational administrators must take charge and become functioning, integrated group members at the same time that they try to understand and accommodate the unwritten norms of the new group. This process is complex for all newly appointed leaders, but it is particularly difficult for those who are different- in ethnicity, race, or gender- from traditional incumbents in leadership roles (Hart, 1995).

Women often must deal with the fact that their behaviors evoke confusion and misconceptions among their constituents. Women leaders who value relationships and who are more relaxed in their leading, are often perceived as too soft, indecisive, weak, and incompetent. Others who exhibit an intensity of professionalism are often seen as too cold, too distant, too perfectionist. Furthermore, when women leaders' beliefs are incongruent with those of the organization and community, they are often alienated by others in the organization. This is exacerbated when the "good old boys" hold the power, control communication, interpret policy, and set the norms for success. This is especially problematic to women when success is normatively defined as managerial efficiency, timely reporting, an absence of complaints, problems, or phone calls. Women who value community building, collective visioning, and democracy may experience feelings of inadequacy and inefficacy in such an organizational environment (Hart, 1995).

The Study

Theoretically, the purpose of this study was to discover the ecological and psychological transitions women undergo as they consider leaving the classroom for an administrative position. Though Shakeshaft (1989) reported that women school principals create and maintain closer relationships with children, parents, and teachers, and are perceived to lead more successful schools than do their male counterparts, many women still hesitate when considering an administrative position. Their fears center around losing contact with the real business of schooling, teaching and learning, and becoming too distant and separated from children. They also worry about their own leadership dispositions and how the established powers will perceive and interpret their work (Hackney, 1994). Our research, however, centered around the perceptions and aspirations of women teachers who have decided to pursue positional leadership and who anticipate a career move within the next couple of years. The underlying motive of our research was to engage this group of eleven women as co-researchers and offer them opportunities for reflective and projective thinking about leadership and the roles they will someday assume in hopes that they would be better prepared to deal with the "existing social groups with established norm, beliefs, and assumptions" (Hart, 1995) of which they will become a part. The findings of our study can inform school districts so that they might better understand and support these new women leaders. The findings can also be instructive to educational administration preparation programs with respect to recognizing, affirming, and valuing the leadership models of women as respectable alternatives to the traditional male model. But most importantly, the findings personify and validate the theoretical underpinnings of women's leadership with real women's voices and experiences.

Participants

We invited nearly 40 women enrolled in the masters, educational specialist, and doctoral educational administration preparation programs at a Northeastern Ohio university to become a part of our study. Eleven women responded and agreed to become co-researchers with us. The women varied in age (late 20s to mid 50s), in experience (a few years to over 20 years teaching), in marital status (5 married with children, 1 married with no children, 3 divorced with children, 2 single/never married).

Developing the Research Questions

Though as researchers we were particularly interested in these women's conceptions of leadership, we were also interested in what they wanted to know about themselves as they prepared for a future administrative position. Our central research question was, "To feel successful as a school leader, do these women feel they will need to reconcile their own conceptions of leadership with that which has been the existing model?" To expand that question, we invited the participants to a research get-together during which we conducted a focus group and asked them the following open-ended questions:

1) As you prepare for an administrative position and anticipate leaving your role as a classroom teacher, what would you like to tell us about?

2) What do you want us to ask you about?

We developed the following three sets of additional research questions from the analysis of the focus group data. The questions directly reflected that which the women wanted to know about themselves and guided the design of our interview protocol.

1) Why are the women of the study motivated toward school leadership?

2) What interpersonal dynamics do the women of the study feel will impact their effectiveness as school leaders?

Where do the women of the study envision they will draw their support?

Where do they expect to encounter a lack of support?

3) How have these women's personal lives affected, or been affected, by their decisions to pursue and prepare for school leadership?

Data Collection and Analysis

It was important to us that we allow all of these women to speak openly about their experiences and feelings. We used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool. Triangulation was achieved through the analysis of journals the women kept and the notes from their paired conversations which occurred several times throughout the course of the study.

We analyzed the data using the Strauss and Corbin (1990) componential model for coding data in stages: open, axial, and selective coding. Data were initially open coded using the topics represented by the four research questions.

During the second stage, the axial coding stage, we were able to reassemble the data in new ways, around the categories which began to emerge: the women's need for affiliation, their other-centeredness, and their sense of mission. Each category, or theme, was further analyzed to uncover the subcategorical themes hidden within.

Selective coding characterized the final stage of data analysis. This stage permitted the linking of the earlier determined categories to create stories of causal conditions, strategies, and consequences for action-oriented construction of grounded theory which will be reported later in this paper. During the selective coding stage, our objective was to identify the core phenomenon

around which all the categories were integrated. This involved selection of the core category, or story line, relating it to the other categories, validating the relationships, and filling in categories in need of further refinement (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Soundness of the Study

The soundness of a qualitative study depends on its credibility, its reliability, and its transferability. To accurately identify and describe the transition these women were experiencing as they anticipated a move from the classroom to an administrative position, we conducted the interviews in tandem, analyzed the data as a team, and worked toward agreement in the interpretation of the findings. We kept field notes, preserved the data on audio-tape and in hard copy, and verified the data with participants during a culminating focus group. We do not assume that the findings of this study generalize to larger populations, but only that they might be instructive about other similar groups of women contemplating a future in educational administration.

The Findings

During the axial stage of coding, three dominant themes emerged from the analysis of the data gathered in this study:

1) These women are grounded in the necessity for affiliation.
2) These women are other-centered: They prioritize the moral responsibility for the care of the relationships in their lives.
3) These women are on a mission of service: a love of "the right" and the desire to follow it.

The First Theme: These Women Are Grounded in a Necessity for Affiliation

Repeatedly, with each participant we heard a focus on the importance of relationships in their lives. Whether discussing their personal lives or their "extended families," as Rae so often referred to her workplace, these women depended on the connections they made with others. Audrey so powerfully stated the feelings of the group when she said that "leadership comes from relationships...we need to stay close to each other."

The women voiced the importance of relationships for theirs and others' personal and professional security, achievement, celebration, and consolation. They did not "know how to separate their personal and professional" lives (Carol). As Bonnie noted, because "women are bonders," these women spoke consistently throughout their interviews, paired conversations, and journals of the need for creating "welcoming organizations" (Rae), where people were available and accessible to each other, where harmony was cherished, and where "lots and lots of dialogue" would take place (Carol). They also voiced the importance of safety nets, shared vulnerability, and "stewardship" (Wendy), caring for and about people, and " having each other to care" (Rae) about them. Affiliation with others, personally and professionally, was integral to their notions of leadership. Their conceptualizations of leadership were defined by the importance of the relationships in their lives.

The Second Theme: These Women Are Other-centered; They Prioritize the Moral Responsibility for the Relationships in Their Lives

Though we have separated out this second theme, it is highly intertwined with the first theme of affiliation. However, it redirects attention from the individual's own need for affiliation to a consideration of the needs of others. It reinforces the notion of affiliation coupled

with the ethic of care and responsibility (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). It explains much of the accommodations these women have made in their personal and professional lives; it describes their concern to make sure that families and colleagues are cared for and comfortable. It reaches from their personal lives and family responsibilities to their visions of leadership. For these women, it was more than an isolated act; it was a way of living, a way of being.

Wendy, Rae, Mary, Susan, and Carol spoke extensively of family responsibilities. All of them deferred academic study and their pursuit of a leadership position until personal lives permitted it. Their families came first causing both Wendy and Susan to start their graduate programs twice, interrupted because of children's needs and unsupportive husbands, respectively. Beth quipped that she was free to pursue her interests as long as there was "food in the frig and the jeans were clean." But Mary most poignantly stated, "For years I focused solely on my husband and children. I'm *finally* doing what's important to me, satisfying something in me."

Rae, a single, divorced mother of two, worked as a teacher and a waitress, supported her children, and went to graduate school. On the verge of collapse, she said "I took a summer off, *finally* listening to my body, *finally* doing what was important for me." Carol struggled with her husband's lack of understanding. She stayed up very late at night to do her academic work, to avoid taking time and attention away from her husband. She said that it was "difficult to get people to understand just what the drive is all about." She was a master of accommodation, adjustment, and compromise who attended to her family responsibilities first so as to be able to pursue her professional dreams.

Interestingly, even the women of the study who are single or married without children, referred to the responsibility of caring for families first, if at some time they were to acquire a

husband and/or children. They knew this would become the most pressing priority.

The theme of accommodation, the other-centeredness, the moral responsibility for the care of the relationships in their lives, spilled into professional lives as well. Amy spoke of retaining duties that could be turned over to someone else out not out of a need to control, but out of a moral responsibility. Her extreme concern about students and school programming caused her to take on more work than others might think necessary, burdening herself out of a sense of responsibility to the children. Audrey spoke of denying herself the opportunity to apply for a new position in her district because, at that particular point in time, doing so would damage relationships in the organization with professional jealousy. She deferred her career progress for the sake of the others and the good of the school community at large.

When discussing their roles as teacher leaders and aspiring administrators, the women emphasized the need to "listen and learn from others...to get a feel for their agendas". They were conscious of "adults coming (to the school organization) with different feelings and beliefs, not clean slates" (Wendy) making working together toward a common goal quite a challenge. Yet, they were intent on creating a climate in their organization where people would be comfortable to take some risks and would be able to work and learn together as part of an "extended family" (Rae).

The Third Theme: These Women Are on a Mission of Service.

"It's not about position. It's not about money. It's about 'This is what I have to do for kids. This is my calling. This is what I have to do for the world.' Is this a religion? It is!" (Carol). To the women of the study, leading was, as Carol continued, a "way of life, a set of beliefs." They repeatedly spoke of "being in touch with" who they were and what they believed

(Amy). Their mission was expressed in their love and desire to follow what they believed was "right." Several of the women actually spoke of "owing something to the world" (Wendy) and "giving back" what was given to them (Bonnie). It was obvious that they were operating from an altruistic as opposed to a more instrumental or self-serving base.

The data reconstructed under this third theme, "The Mission of Service," arranged itself into three subcategories: grounding in principles, ethics, morality; the operationalizing of beliefs; and, the purpose behind the leadership. The first subcategory, grounding in principles, ethics, and morality was characterized by a strong belief in stewardship, which was articulated clearly by Wendy as a "caring for people, places, what will happen and what people will do" in the school organization. The women cited the importance of standing up for their beliefs and exerting gentle pressure on the organization to establish and maintain a culture of goodness, kindness, respect, trust, and focus on children. Included in their belief systems was an appreciation for diversity. Wendy spoke of "honoring differences," others referred to the importance of validation of ideas which "come from the trenches." The women of the study believed in the value of the individuals of the school organization, the children, the parents, the teachers.

Of equal importance was their belief in the organization, its collective inquiry, its growth, and therefore change for the better. Wendy spoke of her responsibility of "engaging the minds of children and adults." They would not compromise their own and others' learning growth as a way of life in the school. Their beliefs were dominated by a need for continuous inquiry. Asking the difficult questions, pressing for answers: What's best for kids? What are we doing to alter the underlying structures to provide what's best for kids? Am I doing all I can to

make this vision a reality? Do I have what it takes?

The second subcategory of the third theme provided data which helped to describe and explain how these women approach the operationalizing of their beliefs. As Carol noted, "The bottom line for me is if it's best for kids, then by golly we're going to find a way to make it happen." As she continued, that might mean continuously "talking, thinking, dreaming," asking those hard questions, keeping the vision before them, and providing the guidance, nurturance, and strength necessary to help people to do their jobs. As Amy stated, "There's a framework that things fit between, but it doesn't hurt to *nudge* that framework."

Operationalizing their beliefs also meant having an "honest voice..." themselves and encouraging the synergy which comes from hearing many voices and sharing in many ideas. These women felt the need for all in the organization to share accountability. Leadership to them was a joint endeavor; they greatly valued community participation in decision making and problem solving. Several women stated that they *wanted* students, teachers, and parents to be the source of ideas. Carol said that she had "given up the idea" that she had "all the answers," feeling now that she has very few of them. The women felt they would best operationalize their principles and beliefs about serving children and families if they could convince all school adults to take the responsibility to lead by example and to enable and inspire each other. As Rae reflected, these women wanted to lead by "being human, staying human", and finding joy in their work. And as Carol shared, "I lead with love. That is something I always remind myself of."

The third subcategory under the third theme, the mission of service, gave direction to these women's conception of leading. The "service" notion of the theme was illustrated vividly in this category. Their sense of commitment, dedication, and obligation to "give back" to the

profession was loud and strong:

> I've taken. They trained me so that I could work and become successful, put myself through college and graduate school. (I need to) give back to education what it has given to me" (Bonnie).

The women spoke of affecting change for the betterment of the school organization and the education of children, of making a positive difference in the school, and of having more influence in positional leadership than they might have as a classroom teacher.

These women were driven by a desire build a spirit of community in their schools. Becoming role models they felt they influence the community to take responsibility to "work for the common good- to work for all of us" (Bonnie). As Cindy noted, and the others mirrored, "We all own this. It's everybody's school." They were intent on minimizing their own importance and maximizing the importance of others. As evidenced by Audrey's decision not to apply for a new leadership position because it would damage existing, fragile relationships, these women were not afraid of self-sacrifice for the common good. Their values extended beyond themselves and their own achievement. Perhaps Wendy best summarized it: "The heart and soul of leadership is the development of others' leadership for the common good."

The Third Theme: Negative Instances

Within this theme we found two negative instances, Sally and Cindy. Sally spoke the language of the other women. She referred repeatedly to the need for participatory management, shared problem solving, and decision making; yet her motives were much more instrumental than those of the other women. She believed that "happy workers make good workers" and help to achieve the goals of the school; whereas, with the other women the moral "rightness" of

exercising more democratic leadership was more pronounced. Their first consideration was maintaining a high regard for people and the morality of more inclusionary democratic practice. Vision development, goal achievement, and change were more secondary considerations.

Nonetheless, Sally was centered on children and on "anything that could help me help the kids." She did not ever want to "divorce herself from the rest of the group" because all school adults were "partners in the kids' education." However, her feelings seemed to be motivated by a desire to make leadership "life easier," and to help the business of schooling transpire more smoothly.

It is our interpretation that these results might be explained by Sally's extreme intelligence, her youth, and her limited life and professional experience. A very quick study, in less than a year Sally has assimilated into her thinking the more contemporary, feminist notions of leadership. She is very comfortable with these conceptions of leadership; they fit well into her own mindscape. Yet, very young in the profession, she has not had the opportunity to live and learn, to make mistakes, to alienate others with her decisions, and to attempt to manage the complexities of dealing with difficult questions and people. She has known success in her personal life, her academic career, and now her first teaching position. It may be that leadership is just another step along the way for her, another endeavor in which she will experience success. Therefore, she sees her methods as more procedural, her decisions as less contextual, and her motivation as more instrumental than the other women see theirs. She is, at this time, more concerned with doing the "right thing" than with doing what's right.

Cindy, on the other hand, is another, yet different, negative instance. Cindy is a single woman who has been teaching for about ten years. As a teacher, she has experienced only a

traditional model of leadership. Personally, she grew up in a very well educated, professional family with highly conservative ideals. Within her administrative preparation course work, Cindy has struggled with the more contemporary notions of leadership. A very pleasant and considerate individual, Cindy "likes everyone to get along." She added: "On a personal level it is upsetting to me when there is not teaming, not collaboration...the kids suffer." Nevertheless, Cindy views leadership as a responsibility to "win people over, find supporters, set expectations, be clear and concise, provide the know-how and the materials...to accomplish the job." Cindy realizes the need for relationships within the school, but for the purpose of goal achievement. Unlike the other women in the group, Cindy is more focused on her future role as one of positional authority. Her concept of leadership is one of providing "guidance, information, nourishment, strength to accomplish a goal,...the determination of which goals need to be met,...belief in the organization, and...knowing when 'This is the way it will be done.' "

Cindy strongly believes that we "owe something to the world" and "have an obligation to the profession." Yet, Cindy is less driven by the moral principles of democracy and community building than she is the moral responsibility of positional leadership to get others to do what she considers the right thing to do. She stated very succinctly, "If that's the way I think it should be, then that's the way it will be." We would assert that Cindy's very strong, confident personality, coupled with her experiential exposure to only traditional, male leadership models and her very conservative personal values contribute to her more hierarchical conceptions of leadership. Many models of women's leadership exist. Cindy's just happens to be dissimilar to the ones expressed by the others in the study group.

Though Sally and Cindy are both on missions and exhibit strong desires to do the right,

thing, that which is behind their belief structures and their behavior is much more influenced by the traditional measures of success than by those suggested by the other women in this study. Their more instrumental thinking is characterized by Cindy who says it is important to be "pleasant not because it is nice...but because it makes people work harder, makes them do their jobs better. If they are happy, they put out more effort and make education for kids better."

Discussion of the findings

The final stage of coding, the selective stage, required us to revisit our research questions with a newfound perspective. Based upon the interviews we conducted, as well as the paired conversations notes and journal entries the women submitted, we were able to reconstruct the data to tell the story of these women in transition from the classroom to the administrative office. What we discovered among these women was that they are on a beliefs-centered mission of service bolstered by their affinity for affiliation and enabled by their responsibility for, and their accommodation of, others' needs.

Our initial question asked, "To feel successful as school leaders, do these women feel they will need to reconcile their own conceptions of leadership with that which has been the existing model?" In essence, the answer to the question was a resounding "No!" Yet that "No!" was qualified by the complexity of context through which the women described their notions of leadership. What has emerged from our study is a model of feminine leadership existing in a cyclical state of flux and transition. Our model of leadership is highly dependent upon, and supported by, the establishment and maintenance of the relationships in these women's lives; and it is enabled, or even allowed, by their acceptance of the responsibility for accommodation of others in their personal and professional lives.

Belief-centered leadership

As these women spoke to us about their conceptions of leadership we did not hear the language common to traditional management paradigm: unilateral decision-making, positional power, leadership as a technique, political savvy, and success by getting other to do what "you" want them to do (Blackmore, 1989). Rather,"true" to their beliefs, we heard women say that their leadership "takes a different route, plays a different tune" (Carol). They spoke the language of commitment, obligation, duty, and responsibility for the common good of the community.

Several of them even spoke of their transition toward leadership as the fulfillment of a calling. They were moved by what Regan and Brooks referred to as their intuition, "the ability to give equal weight to experience and abstraction, mind and heart" (1995, p. 33). Leading schools was just something they *had* to do.

Central to their notions of leadership were the ethics of care and responsibility (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). Their reference to caring took on a meaning more akin to Regan and Brooks' definition, "the translation of moral commitment to action on behalf of others" (1995, p.27). Repeatedly, these women affirmed their moral purpose as leaders, centering their efforts and those of others, on what would best benefit children. Their primary concern was to foster those conditions in the school which would support their moral disposition (Sergiovanni, 1990). They were committed to what is right and determined to see it materialize for children. They continually asked of themselves and others difficult, often disconcerting question: Why are we here? What is of greatest value to us? How can we best serve the needs of those who depend on us? How can we best affirm each other? How can we help each other develop into moral leaders?

The women of the study were both anxious and excited about assuming leadership positions. They spoke of their fears of not being able to stand up for what is right and of their souls and spirits being crushed in hostile environments (Audrey). Yet, they were not deterred in their quest for leadership and in the determination that they could make a positive difference in schools. Audrey quoted Bolman and Deal to express her emotions: "The wizard says that everyone is afraid. Courage is the ability to go on anyway" (p. 47). These women exhibited such courage, impelled by their firm beliefs to move forward.

Bolstered by Affiliation

Repeatedly, the women of the study expressed the necessity of relationships. Audrey and Susan, in a paired conversation, agreed that "in order to risk, to make changes, you *must* have relationships." They spoke of affiliation, developing and maintaining relationships, for the good of the community, to achieve the moral purposes of the school, and because of a sturdy beliefs in democratic values. For them, strong affiliation provided the whole community security through support, a basis for collegiality and achievement of moral purpose, and a platform for not only celebration but also for consolation.

The women envisioned their leadership diffused through affiliation. Marked by collaboration, shared problem-solving and decision-making, "lots and lots of dialogue" (Carol), synergistic collegiality, and an exchange of vulnerability, their dispositions of leadership caused them and others to see each other as "real people, who have each other to care" about each other and the good of the community (Rae). They saw leadership in their schools buttressed by the constructive relationships they sought to create and nurture.

Enabled by Accommodation

To feel free and confident in their ability to lead, these women needed to care for those people and relationships that they held dear in their lives. They were continuously conscious of the needs of those around them. Accommodation was a way of living, a way of being for them. Whether in reference to caring for family, making sure children and husbands were provided for, or in reference to the needs of the many others in their professional lives, these women felt a keen sense of duty, responsibility, and obligation. The commitment they brought to leading had its origins in the responsibility they felt for individuals. Undoubtedly, these women value others and in no ways see them as means to an end or obstacles to hurdle, but rather as people to be heard, understood, and accommodated.

Just as they had made sure "the frig was full and the jeans were clean" (Beth) at home, they wanted to make sure that the needs of people in the organization were recognized and addressed. As leaders, they were motivated by a deep and genuine respect for others. Realizing that "leadership is an unique as the people who possess it" (Carol), they were intent on listening to others with caring and empathy, seeking to understand, validating others, asking questions gently, and speaking softly. As Wendy noted, "honoring differences" was essential to leading toward harmony and the common good. These women firmly believed that if they worked collaboratively, respected differences, and practiced leadership as *learners*, they would not experience difficulty "fitting in." Centered on their beliefs and intent on the moral purposes of the school, they were convinced that they would facilitate far more enriching conditions for children and adults in the school by leading with accommodation, collaboration, and an honest respect for diverse ideas and opinions. They wanted to lead by enabling others to consider and

contribute alternative, new, and different ways of achieving the common good and by creating a trusting, respectful, and caring environment. With respect for those who would offer them little support, who could make their lives difficult, who might block their efforts toward moral purposes, they spoke of exerting extra effort, "stepping out of one's own frame of reference into the other's" (Noddings, 1984, p.24). As Rae noted, "The child (and we would add "adult") who is hardest to love needs your love the most." And as Maxine Greene has written, these women would agree that this would mean "becoming a friend of someone else's mind, with the wonderful power to return to that person a sense of wholeness" (1995, p. 38). The women of the study embraced the notion that there must exist in their schools "an active reciprocity among different people before community can arise" (Greene, 1995, p.40).

Leading from the Head and Heart

These women in transition were grounded in their beliefs about children, about the business of schooling, about the roles and responsibilities of school adults, and about leading. More than a just a few times, they spoke of themselves as leaders who were also learners (Barth, 1990). They felt themselves in continuous formation, interdependent with the flow and flux of the organizational and personal relationship needs they faced each day. They were journeying, not anticipating arriving at any predetermined time or place, but responsive to and supportive of the moral purposes of the community and the recognized common good. These women were what Greenleaf would have referred to as a "servant to the community... a leader as a servant of his followers" (1996, p.334).

The women of the study were able to reinforce their leadership dispositions by their need for affiliation and through their beliefs in accommodation. Governed by an ethic of care and

responsibility (Gilligan, 1992; Noddings, 1994), they were moved by their hearts toward constructiveness and compassion and stewardship for the people, places, and events in their lives, personal and professional. Their notions of leadership do not stand alone; they are defined through their relationships and their commitment to goodness, to kindness, to trust, to honesty, to what is fundamentally right.

Implications for practice

The findings of this study can inform both graduate schools of educational administration as well as the educational organizations within which these women, and similar others, may assume leadership positions. As suggested by the findings of the study, those involved in planning and teaching educational administration programming, must attend to the overwhelming importance of relationships in these women's lives. As Bonnie noted, "women are bonders," and "need to stay close to each other" (Audrey). Therefore, it would behoove existing programs to consider structural redesign. Developing cohorts, especially those which would give women a choice to study only with other women, are one way to address relational needs. Others ways might include courses which are more integrated in content, allow students to stay together and support each other longer than a quarter or a semester, and offer intensive opportunity for team work and group assignments.

Of equal importance is the recognition, acceptance, and validation of women's ways of leading in program content, course readings, and professorial attitude. As the findings have pointed out, women such as the ones in the study, are not using the language of traditional management and leadership. Their conceptions of leadership call for different words, different descriptions, and different determiners of success. It is imperative that women feel affirmed in

their knowledge and ways of leading, that women's notions and experiences be respected as valid alternatives to the traditional existing model. Historically, women have been taught that there is only one leadership knowledge base, that there is only one way to lead. That must cease so that women do not suffer discrimination and an absence of support from "traditional male professors, in subtle ways" (Beth).

The educational organizational, as well, would benefit by acknowledging the findings of this study. The existing power structures need to understand women leaders as being grounded in beliefs and experience, focused on the future, and centered on the common good. Community based, these women would find support in the organization's encouragement of linkages between and among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Moving away from the traditional, administrative management silos (curriculum and instruction, personnel, facilities, finance) to toward more integrated teams of leaders would encourage communication, understanding, empathy, and respect for the varied roles within the organization and for the various "levels" of responsibility. By providing for more opportunities for school adults to work together, to find connection around school goals, and to interface their expertise the organization would encourage a more synergistic environment and more creative solutions to problems they face.

Because women similar to those in this study are intent on finding better ways of leading the business of schooling, they have a high regard for organizational and personal learning and inquiry. Organizational support for less than traditional measures of success could support inquiry among the adults in the school and lead to more constructive and creative problem identification and solution. If the emphasis on efficiency, organization, management, positional authority, and unilateral decision-making were replaced by an emphasis on community building,

participatory leadership, collective problem-solving, collaboration, and hierarchical flattening, women would be assessed for their strengths and competencies rather than for those "techniques" to which they find it difficult to relate.

Conclusion

The women of our study are discontent with the educational status quo and with leadership as it has traditionally existed. They believe there is a better way and they are committed to practicing it. Though faced with some fears as they anticipate a move from a place where they have been comfortable and have met with success, the women of our study believed that "it is the inspiration and initiative of individual persons that move the world along" (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 334). They are intent on being one of those individuals. And for them, that means being firmly planted in their own beliefs, yet being highly interdependent with others who can share and interpret those beliefs, and being keenly aware and responsive to the needs of others in their lives. For them "the bottom line is this: I will be fine. I will lead with my head and my heart. I *will* make a difference wherever I go and I will enjoy doing it!" (Carol): all for the common good.

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